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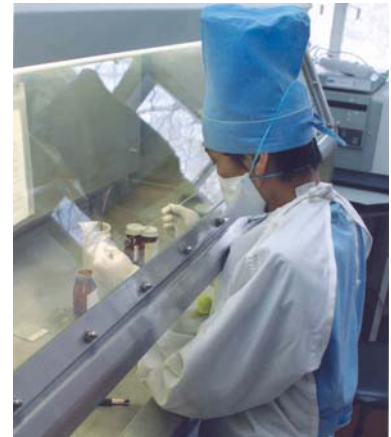
June 11, 2008

USAID Newsletter

Regional news

Participants of a USAID-supported Epidemiology Program Reap Prestigious Awards

For the second year in a row, a trainee or recent graduate from the USAID-funded CDC's Central Asia Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) has won the prestigious William H. Foege Award at CDC's annual Epidemic Intelligence Service Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. This year's winner Dr. Gulmira Sailybayeva received the award for her investigation of an outbreak of HIV infection among children in southern Kazakhstan in 2006. Dr. Sailybayeva's presentation was one of seven chosen for oral presentation this year from over 100 abstracts submitted by the FETP participants from over 25 countries. The award is given for the presentation that best exemplifies an public health intervention in which epidemiology leads to public health actions. Last year the Foege award went to a trainee from Tajikistan Dr. Matluba Dehkanova for her investigation of an outbreak of leptospirosis.



The USAID-funded program supports the development of local epidemiologists. Photo: CDC

Kazakhstan

World Bank and USAID Collaborate on the Design of \$300 Million Health Sector Reform Project

Earlier this year, the World Bank approved a \$117.7 million loan for the Kazakhstan Health Sector Technology Transfer and Institutional Reform project. Kazakhstan will fund \$178.4 million of the \$296.1 million project that will support the key health sector reforms pursued by the Government of Kazakhstan. The project will help to introduce international standards and building long-term institutional capacity within the Ministry of Health and related healthcare institutions, thus institutionalizing the reforms promoted by USAID over the past fifteen years. USAID's ZdravPlus project contributed to the loan application and design of the project by facilitating policy dialogue with Kazakh partners, preparing background reports, and supporting the design and development of the project implementation plans.

Junior Achievement Kazakhstan Graduates from USAID Funding

After nearly 14 years of cooperation, USAID ended its support for Junior Achievement programs in Kazakhstan in March 2008. The decision was based on the successful performance of the organization over the past couple of years, when Junior Achievement has gained recognition among the local organizations and has demonstrated outstanding success in fundraising. Since 1994, Junior Achievement programs with USAID assistance have reached thousands of young people throughout Kazakhstan. In 2006-2007 school year alone, over 227,000 youth in more than 2,000 country's schools participated in various Junior Achievement courses. The project developed and adapted a range of teaching materials; four of its textbooks have been approved by the Government for the use at high school. The graduation announcement was made in late March at the National Junior Achievement Student Tournament in Economics, where 60 students from 10-11 grades from all over the country competed in their knowledge of economics. The winners received scholarships to study at several prestigious universities.



With support from USAID, Junior Achievement was training over 227,000 students a year by 2008. Photo: Junior Achievement



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USAID-supported Survey Presents Data on the State of Kazakhstan's Women and Children

Recently, Kazakhstan's Parliament was presented the final report of the country's first Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey. This survey provides information on the state of women and children in the country and enables Kazakhstan to monitor the achievement of Millennium Development Goals, as well as the targets set out in the international document A World Fit for Children. Due to the significant differences in the social and economic development of the country's regions, the survey is unique for Kazakhstan. It provides representative data for all 14 country's oblasts and two cities of the national importance, as well as for the urban and rural populations. The survey includes information on children and infant mortality rates, children's nutrition and health, water supply and sanitation, health of mothers and new-born children, reproductive health, attitude to the domestic violence, and knowledge about HIV/AIDS. The survey was carried out in 2006 by the Kazakhstan Statistics Agency and the Information and Data Processing Centre with support from USAID, several United Nations agencies, and the International Labor Organization.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan Launches the U.S. Millennium Challenge Threshold Program to Improve the Rule of Law

In March, the United States and the Kyrgyz Republic signed a Millennium Challenge Corporation threshold program agreement. The two-year, \$16 million program seeks to increase the independence and effectiveness of the judicial system, develop a more functional and trusted police force, improve the government's capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption cases, educate the public and media on the dangers of corruption, and strengthen the financial disclosure system. USAID will be responsible for oversight and implementation of the Kyrgyz threshold program. In April, the Government of Kyrgyzstan confirmed the ratification of the agreement, thereby committing to carrying out the reforms and making the agreement effective for USAID programs. USAID selected DPK Consulting to be the implementer for assistance for the Judicial Reform Component; the U.S. Department of Justice will implement the police and criminal justice components.



USAID Regional Mission Director Mr. Frej and Head of the Presidential Administration at the signing of the agreement. Photo: U.S. Embassy

Kyrgyz Health Standards Meet International Requirements

Recently, the USAID-supported Medical Accreditation Commission of Kyrgyzstan received an official approval of its national health standards from the International Society for Quality in Health Care. This approval demonstrates that Kyrgyzstan's health standards meet international requirements for best practice. The Medical Accreditation Commission is the only licensing-accreditation agency in Central Asia. Formed in 1997, it leads the development of Kyrgyzstan's health standards to ensure continuous improvement of the quality of health services in the country. Over the past ten years these health standards have passed through a series of revisions based on stakeholder consultations and recommendations of the International Society for Quality in Health Care. The latest version, comprised of 205 standards, was submitted to the International Society last year. The Medical Accreditation Commission is also helping to establish an independent health-provider accreditation function and has accredited nearly 200 family medical facilities in Kyrgyzstan over the past three years. USAID's ZdravPlus project



Kyrgyz expert on healthcare accreditation Gulmira Sadakbaeva holds the Certificate on International Quality Standards. Photo: ZdravPlus



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continues to support these activities and is helping the commission with its long-term sustainability as well options for replicating this example throughout Central Asia.

USAID-supported Exhibition Links Region's Agricultural Producers and Dealers

To improve commercial relations throughout the Ferghana Valley (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), USAID helped the Agribusiness Association of Kyrgyzstan organize the fourth "AgroExpo Silk Road" exhibition for agricultural sector producers and dealers in February. Forty-three producers and suppliers of agro-inputs and equipment, donor organizations, and financial institutions from Europe and Asia took part in the exhibition, and over 2,000 people visited it. Producers and farmers had an opportunity to buy goods, obtain information for their business management, and established business contacts. Business contracts in the amount of \$100,000 were set up during the exhibition. The organizers also offered several workshops for the participants, including discussion of amendments to the Law on Veterinary, seminar on cooperative societies, and training on organizing exhibitions.



"The exhibition gave me an opportunity to distribute the information about my store and to establish new contacts" – says Habbibula, owner of a farm store "Orunbai. Photo: AAK

Sharing Best Practices of Local Self-Governance in the Kyrgyz Republic

Two-hundred and forty participants shared best practices of local governance in Kyrgyzstan at a conference organized by the USAID Decentralization and Local Government project in February. Heads of local government bodies, Parliament deputies, representatives from the President's Administration and Government's Office and the National Agency on Local Self-Government Affairs, media, as well as civil society and international organizations took part in the event. Twenty-eight local communities were declared winners of the "Best Practices of City and Village Local Self-Government" and "Citizen Participation in Budget Formation" competitions and received prizes that totaled \$50,000. The USAID project also presented a book entitled "Best Practices of Local Self-Governance in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2007." This was the second conference on best practices of local self-governments in Kyrgyzstan. The USAID project provides assistance to 130 rural and 25 urban municipalities across the country to improve local governance and enhance government cooperation with local communities in addressing issues of local significance.



From left to right: a representative of the President's Administration, the U.S. Ambassador, and the head of one of the winning councils. Photo: Urban Institute

Tajikistan

U.S. Became the Largest Assistance Provider During Tajikistan's Humanitarian Crisis

Last winter, U.S. provided over \$2 million of assistance to the people of Tajikistan after extreme winter weather and an energy crisis have caused a humanitarian crisis in the country. USAID provided over \$830,000 worth of fuel, heaters, clothing, household supplies, and health services to those in need through Save the Children, CARE, and Mercy Corps. In addition, the U.S. Department of State shipped more than 259,000 humanitarian daily rations, valued at \$1.6 million dollars. Since January 2008, extreme cold weather and social and economic factors have resulted in food insecurity,



Hundreds of Tajik children have benefited from the American assistance. Photo: Mercy Corps



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power shortages, and damage to agricultural assets and water systems in Tajikistan, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Food insecurity affected more than 550,000 people.

Tajikistan's Microfinance Organizations Report 100% Growth

At a recent annual meeting, Tajikistan's Association of Microfinance Organizations (AMFOT) announced that by the end of 2007, the total value of AMFOT member loan portfolio was \$36 million, more than double of the amount a year earlier. The cumulative disbursed loans reached \$133 million and the number of clients – 202,000. Nearly 50% of loans were disbursed to trade, 30% - to live stocks growers, and 10% to agricultural businesses across the country. AMFOT was created with assistance from the USAID-funded Central Asian Microfinance Alliance (CAMFA) project to provide services to Tajikistan's microfinance institutions.

A New Union will Promote Business Reforms in Tajikistan

To stimulate organizational improvement and government recognition of needed reforms, the Union of Business Associations of Sogd oblast was formed in Khujand in January 2008. The association will unite more than 20 business associations and public unions, more than 800 legal entities, as well as 5,000 individual entrepreneurs and dekhon farmers. The association was formed with assistance from the USAID Business Environment Improvement project to facilitate promotion of economic reforms which can positively affect enterprise activity in Tajikistan. The project is working with business associations from different regions of Tajikistan, promoting reforms through them in close collaboration with government bodies at the national and regional levels.



The new union will work under the slogan "Ten Thousand People – One Voice." Photo: BEI

USAID Supports the Center for Medical and Social Rehabilitation of Drug Users

A new center for medical and social rehabilitation of drug users "Najot" (Rescue) opened in March 2008 in Palass Village, Sughd Province. The center was supported by the USAID-funded Drug Demand Reduction Program (implemented in part by Open Society Institute), in cooperation with NGO "DINA" and the Executive Government Office, Health Department, Coordination Councils on Drug, HIV, and STI Prevention of Sughd Province. Representatives of Executive Government Office of Sughd province, different ministries of Tajikistan, international and public organizations, and mass media participated in the ceremony. The USAID-funded program helped train specialists of the center on modern methods of work with drug users, renovated the building, and provided equipment. The new center can work with 30 patients at a time. It offers drop-in services, in-patient treatment, social rehabilitation, resources for drug specialist, as well as work therapy, consultations, and counseling.



Ceremonial opening of the Center for Medical and Social Rehabilitation of Drug Users in Palass Village of Sughd province, Tajikistan. Photo: DDRP

Thousands of residents in Sarband have better access to drinking water

As a result of the USAID Local Government project work, Sarband City now provides its residents with better access to water. The project helped to remap the water system from the pump station to the city in preparation for the rehabilitation of the city's water supply system. The project identified the length and diameter of the water main, documented illegal connections and leaks, and installed monometers to monitor water pressure in the system. The water utility repaired leaks and eliminated illegal tapping of water mains that cause massive water losses and lower pressure in the system. In addition, a USAID grant is helping Sarband City to expand access to drinking water from 30% to 80% of city residents, thus covering additional 10,500 citizens. In addition to improved operation of the water utility, the grant will support educational campaigns with citizens.



Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan and Afghanistan Sign Energy Protocol

In Ashgabat in April, technical experts from the Turkmenistan Ministry of Energy and Industry and the Afghanistan Ministry of Energy and Water reached agreement on a plan to increase the supply of electricity from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan. Funded by an initial \$50 million from USAID, the agreement includes the construction of new energy facilities and transmission line on Afghanistan territory. The agreement was lauded by both parties as a significant step forward in energy cooperation. According to the agreement, Afghanistan will increase its import of power by 300 megawatts to alleviate the chronic power shortages in the country. To meet this increased power need, Turkmenistan will build additional energy facilities and a 500 KV transmission line to a border crossing between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Each country agreed to supply the necessary relay protection and control equipment for the new transmission line. Additionally, Turkmenistan will consider supplying power to Badghis Province and to increase power supply to Herat, a major city in western Afghanistan. USAID has estimated that the final costs of construction at Afghan territory may exceed \$130 million.

USAID-supported Center Will Help to Bring Computer Technologies to Schools

On May 26, Turkmenistan's Supreme Council on Science and Technology approved a U.S. Government-funded initiative to develop the use of technology for education, science and research in Turkmenistan. With funding from USAID and the State Department, the project will be implemented by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). IREX will establish an information resource center equipped with computers and high-speed internet connection at the Supreme Council. The center will provide training and access to internet and computers for Turkmenistan's teachers, so that they can use multimedia in their classrooms to improve learning outcomes. The project will help teachers to create an e-platform that will host opportunities for students' and teachers' educational development, online resources for various subjects, an e-library and educational catalogue, projects and competitions, as well as online forums. Introduction of international standards and approaches in education has been prioritized by President Berdimuhamedov as important to the country's development.

National Energy Model to Plan the Use of Turkmenistan's Energy Surplus

Turkmenistan's Ministry of Energy and Industry now has the capacity to operate as a competent and reliable supplier of electricity in international markets. To develop this capacity, USAID provided training to eight engineers from the ministry on operating an integrated, interactive program for simulating, analyzing, and optimizing power system performance. This program will serve as a basis to develop a national energy model, a regional transmission network model for Central Asia, and provide information for making economic decisions for an emerging regional energy market. The training was organized by the USAID Regional Energy Market Assistance Program (REMAP) to help Turkmenistan maximize the benefits from its energy surplus and the growing demand for energy in the world.



Turkmen experts discuss the application of the new program. Photo: REMAP

US Champions Accounting Reform in Turkmenistan

USAID and UNDP recently supported Turkmenistan's first conference on international accounting standards that is expected to become the country's first step toward adopting international financial standards. Held in Ashgabat, the event focused on the introduction of international financial reporting standards into the accounting system of Turkmenistan. International experts and key representatives of the country's banking community highlighted the importance of accounting education in universities and



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the need for continuing professional education. They presented models of successful adoption of the standards in other countries and best practices in the accounting and tax reform. USAID has worked in the area of accounting reform in Turkmenistan for five years and has supported the education of more than 4000 accountants, 130 of whom have become eligible to receive the internationally recognized designation, Certified Accountant Practitioner.

A New Center for HIV/AIDS Prevention Among Youth

USAID's CAPACITY project helped to open a Youth Center in Ashgabat to work with young people that are at high-risk for drug use. Located in a downtown neighborhood close to its target demographic, the center will offer healthy alternatives to drug involvement, counseling, psychological and social support, as well as information on prevention of drug abuse, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV. The center will also be used for meetings, seminars, and awareness talks with youth. CAPACITY is a three-year HIV-prevention project that provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and other relevant bodies for implementation of the National Program for Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS Prevention in Turkmenistan.



Visitors and staff and the new Youth Center. Photo: USAID

Uzbekistan

Communities Learn to Save Water

In March the USAID-funded Water Users Association Support Program conducted the final round of an environmental protection campaign "Ecology, WUA, and Us" in Jondor Rayon, Bukhara Oblast. The campaign was dedicated to the World Water Day, and involved 14 schools and 2,000 people. The campaign included sessions with school children on the water users associations, drawing, poem, skit, and question-and-answer contests. The winner of the contests was a team from the Yasha Ellim Water Users Association.

USAID helps farmers restore irrigation system and increase incomes

Members of Khujabuston Suv Tarmogi Water User Association (WUA) in Payarik Rayon of Samarkand Oblast used to fight over irrigation water almost every day. The farmers, whose lands are located in the tail of the canal, were unsure if they would receive the required amounts of water in a timely fashion for their gardens and orchards. Even if water flow was high, water would not reach the tail of the canal due to high water losses. In 2005, the WUA started cooperating with the USAID-funded Water Users Associations Support Program. The program helped to conduct an assessment of irrigation and drainage networks, identify and plan rehabilitation works, and supported construction of John-Javshar water distribution point. It was completed in 2006 and cost \$2,260. USAID funded water gates and reinforcements, while the community provided labor and locally available materials. The John-Javshar water distribution point provides stable water supply to over 3,000 people, and farmers increased their crop production by almost 50%.



New technologies improve water management, increase harvests, and reduce conflicts among farmers. Photo WUASP